

Message Text

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ACTION HEW-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SS-15 OES-07 CIAE-00 INR-10
NSAE-00 CPR-01 PM-05 NSC-05 ICA-11 OPR-02 PA-01
SY-05 A-01 /082 W
-----017351 181424Z /50

P 181216Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1841
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 11004

DEPT PASS HEW FOR SECRETARY CALIFANO'S OFFICE

DEPT PASS HEW FOR FISCHER

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: TPHY, OEXC, OVIP, OTRA, SHUM, PINT, US, UR
SUBJECT: SECRETARY CALIFANO'S VISIT TO THE USSR: CANCELLA
TION OF ADVANCE PARTY'S TRAVEL TO SOCHI AND SUKHUMI
BECAUSE OF "LOCAL DISTURBANCES"

REF: (A) STATE 109475, (B) STATE 97732

1. ADVANCE PARTY FOR SECRETARY CALIFANO'S VISIT
COMPLETED TRIP TO THE USSR ON MAY 16. SOVIETS PROPOSE THE
SECRETARY CALIFANO VISIT MOSCOW, LENINGRAD, SOCHI AND
SUKHUMI, DURING PERIOD JUNE 13-19. (DETAILED PRELIMINARY
ITINERARY FOR SECRETARY CALIFANO'S TRIP FOLLOWS IN SEPTTEL

2. SOVIET MINISTRY OF HEALTH (MOH) OFFICIALS APPEARED
WILLING TO FACILITATE ALL US REQUESTS CONCERNING SCHEDULING
AND ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR CALIFANO VISIT. THE
ATMOSPHERE OF THE ADVANCE PARTY'S VISIT WAS CLOUDED, HOWEV-
ER, WHEN SOVIETS LITERALLY AT LAST MINUTE ON MAY 15 CAN-
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CELLED ADVANCE PARTY'S PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED VISITS TO
SOCHI AND SUKHUMI. MOH REFUSED TO PROVIDE ANY EXPLANATION
FOR THE CANCELLATION EXCEPT "THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED."
MOH PROVIDED CANCELLATION NOTICE ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE
THAT ONE MEMBER OF THE ADVANCE PARTY, ROBERT FISCHER, WAS
EN ROUTE TO LENINGRAD AIRPORT FOR FLIGHT TO SOCHI
WHEN EMBASSY WAS INFORMED OF CANCELLATION. NEITHER CONGEN

LENINGRAD NOR, EVIDENTLY, MOH WAS ABLE TO GET WORD TO FISCHER BEFORE HIS FLIGHT DEPARTED WITH FISCHER ON BOARD. WHEN FISCHER ARRIVED IN SOCHI LOCAL MOH OFFICIALS WHO MET HIM WERE COMPLETELY UNINFORMED ABOUT THE CANCELLATION AND TOLD FISCHER THAT THEY STILL EXPECTED THE OTHER MEMBER OF THE ADVANCE PARTY, JOHNS, AND ACCOMPANYING MOH OFFICIALS TO ARRIVE IN SOCHI TO ADVANCE THE CALIFANO VISIT HOWEVER, INFORMATION ABOUT THE CANCELLATION EVENTUALLY REACHED SOCHI, AND FISCHER WAS RETURNED FROM SOCHI TO MOSCOW ON FIRST AVAILABLE FLIGHT ON MAY 16.

3. CIRCUMSTANCES APPEAR TO INDICATE THAT MOH ITSELF WAS INFORMED ABOUT NEED TO CANCEL THE ADVANCE PARTY'S VISIT AT THE LAST MOMENT. MOH OFFICIAL WHO INFORMED EMBOFF ABOUT THE CANCELLATION WAS OBVIOUSLY ACTING UNDER INSTRUCTIONS AND APPEARED EXTREMELY UNCOMFORTABLE IN DELIVERING THE MESSAGE. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THE POSSIBLE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF THE CANCELLATION ON THE CALIFANO VISIT BUT CLAIMED INABILITY TO PROVIDE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT THE REASON FOR THE CANCELLATION OTHER THAN PREVIOUSLY CITED CRYPTIC COMMENT. ONE HOUR BEFORE THE CANCELLATION EMBOFF AND SAME MOH OFFICIAL HAD DISCUSSED THE ADVANCE PARTY'S VISIT WITHOUT INDICATION THAT ANYTHING WAS AMISS.

4. WE BELIEVE IT IS LIKELY THAT ABRUPT CANCELLATION OF
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THE ADVANCE PARTY'S VISIT TO SOCHI AND SUKHUMI IS CONNECTED WITH THE TRIAL IN TBILISI OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS GMSAKHURDIA AND KOSTAVA, WHICH BEGAN ON MAY 15. THIS IMPRESSION WAS REINFORCED BY COMMENT OF ONE MOH OFFICIAL IN MOSCOW, WHO EXPRESSED REGRET ABOUT THE ADVANCE PARTY'S TRAVEL DIFFICULTIES, WHICH HE ATTRIBUTED TO "SEVERAL DISTURBANCES OF A LOCAL CHARACTER." ONE OTHER MOH OFFICIAL INDICATED THAT THE DECISION TO CANCEL THE TRAVEL HAD BEEN MADE BY "POLITICAL AUTHORITIES". SOVIET AUTHORITIES PROBABLY WISHED TO PREVENT THE ADVANCE PARTY FROM WITNESSING ANY POSSIBLE DEMONSTRATION OR OTHER MANIFESTATION OF UNREST CONNECTED WITH THE TRIAL, EITHER IN SOCHI, WHICH IS LOCATED NEAR GEORGIA AND NOW IS THROGGED WITH VACATIONERS FROM GEORGIA AS WELL AS THE REST OF THE USSR, OR IN SUKHUMI, WHICH IS A PART OF THE GEORGIAN REPUBLIC.

5. MOH OFFICIALS IN MOSCOW STATED THAT MINISTER OF HEALTH PETROVSKIY WILL BE PREPARED TO GIVE SECRETARY CALIFANO A FORMAL EXPLANATION FOR THE SOCHI-SUKHUMI TRAVEL CANCELLATION DURING THE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO THE USSR.

6. IN RESPONSE TO EMBOFF'S QUERY, MOH REP INDICATED THAT SOVIETS STILL WANT SECRETARY CALIFANO TO VISIT SOCHI AND SUKHUMI. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT IN LIGHT OF RUDE TREATMENT ACCORDED TO SECRETARY CALIFANO'S REPRESENTATIVES AS WELL AS THE FACT THAT CANCELLATION PREVENTED THEM FROM CARRYING OUT ADVANCE WORK THERE, SECRETARY CALIFANO MAY WISH TO

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AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 MOSCOW 11004

RECONSIDER PLAN TO VISIT SOCHI OR SUKHUMI. IF SOCHI-SUKHUMI PORTION IS DROPPED AND SECRETARY CALIFANO VISITS ONLY MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD, PER ORIGINAL PLANS AS INDICATE IN REF B, THEN USSR VISIT DATES WOULD BE JUNE 13 - 16 OR

17. UNDER THIS SCENARIO SECRETARY CALIFANO COULD PLAN TO LEAVE USSR FROM MOSCOW ON JUNE 16, INSTEAD OF TRAVELING TO SOCHI THAT DAY. ALTERNATIVELY , SECRETARY CALIFANO COULD AVOID NECESSITY FOR RETURN FROM LENINGRAD TO MOSCOW BY REMAINING IN MOSCOW UNTIL JUNE 15, LEAVING MOSCOW FOR LENINGRAD ON EVENING OF JUNE 15, AND LEAVING USSR FROM LENINGRAD ON JUNE 16 OR 17. MATLOCK

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